

# Organization of Rural Oklahoma Schools

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## OROS Scholarship Committees Make Selections

The OROS Scholarship recipients have been selected and approved by the board of directors. The scholarship is a one-time five-hundred dollar award to one graduating senior in each of the four quadrants of our organization. The committees consisting of the board of directors of the four quadrants did an outstanding job in their selection process. The directors did not participate in the selection of applicants from their quadrant. Scholarships will be awarded on or before the graduation date of each quadrant winner. Scholarship monies will be distributed upon proof of enrollment in a post-secondary institution and an OROS officer or Board of Director will make every effort to attend the award ceremonies to make the presentations. The Perry Willis Scholarship recipient was also selected by a committee consisting of the OROS officers. The Perry Willis Scholarship is a one-thousand dollar award funded by Mass Group Marketing and will be paid directly to the recipient. The essays of the five winners are included in this newsletter. This year's recipients are: The Perry Willis Scholarship - Adalynn Klugh, Fort Cobb-Broxtton Public Schools; Northeast Quadrant - Justin Pearce, Prague Public Schools; Southwest Quadrant - Laci Scales, Lookeba-Sickles Public Schools; Northwest Quadrant - Rachel Bradley, Beaver Public Schools; Southeast Quadrant - Aerial Smith, Lexington Public Schools. Congratulations students and we wish you the best in your future endeavors.

### Scholarship Essays

*(Editors note) Each applicant was asked to write a short essay discussing the applicant's experiences in a rural educational setting, discussing the benefits as well as detriments of such a setting, as compared to an urban school system, and to discuss the applicant's opinion as to whether or not it would be beneficial for rural schools to remain in operation for future generations. The following essays were submitted by the four quadrant scholarship recipients and the Perry Willis Scholarship recipient. They are written in their entirety.*

**Adalynn Klugh  
The Perry Willis Scholarship  
Fort Cobb-Broxtton Public Schools**

#### **"The Smaller the Better"**

People have always used the phrase "the bigger the better," but when it comes to comparing small rural schools to larger urban schools, this statement is far from true. There are many advantages that occur in rural schools. One example is having small classes. Small classes allow you to feel closer to your teachers and develop more of a "friend" relationship with them. When I say friend, I mean that the teachers are always there for you and support you, but they also push you because they want you to reach your full potential. By having this close relationship with the teachers, and having a small teacher-student ratio, you are able to get more individual help from your teachers. If you are struggling in a certain area, a teacher is always there to give you extra help; if you were in a large school, your teacher might not even notice your struggle and you could fall between the cracks. Bigger is not always better.

Getting involved in high school is a big part of fitting in and having fun, and a small school gives each student this opportunity. Every student is encouraged to get involved, whether it is in academics, a club or organization, or a sport. You not only learn to be a team player, but also a leader. In a larger school, students might not belong to anything or have to choose between activities because of different conflicts. They could get lost and become just another face in the crowd; but at rural schools, everybody is somebody and is treated with dignity and respect.

Although there are many advantages to rural schools, they still have their drawbacks. Everyone who comes from a small school is going to use the example of "everyone knows everyone's business" as one of the disadvantages. It's bad in the sense that if something happens at school, your parents will know about it before you even get home to tell your side of the story. Even though this is considered more of a disadvantage, in my opinion, it is also beneficial. If you are having difficulties, the chances are somebody knows about them, and they are going to do something to help you. In a rural school, everyone supports everyone and is there for each other in the good times and the bad. Because news travels fast, you always have someone right behind you to help pick you up if something is going wrong or to give you a pat on the back if you've done something to deserve it.

Going to a rural school has had a major impact in making me the person I am today. I have had an amazing experience going to a small school, and I have loved every year of it. In my opinion, I truly believe that rural schools prepare you for the many obstacles you are going to face in your life. It has prepared me for difficult situations, but also equipped me with the tools I need to overcome and succeed. I have learned many different life lessons in the classroom, on the athletic field, and in everyday student life that have prepared me for life beyond high school.

I hope that rural schools continue to be around forever so that when I have kids, they will be able to grow up in a close-knit community just like I did and several generations before me. Going to a rural school has opened many doors for my future and has played a significant and positive role in my life; I wouldn't trade it for the world!

**Aerial Smith**  
**Southeast Quadrant Representative**  
**Lexington Public Schools**

I have always lived my life with the belief that one should always shoot for the stars. Even if you miss the stars you will at least land upon the moon. Growing up in a small community has done nothing but accelerate that belief. Lexington Public Schools, even with its small enrollment, has facilitated a great high school experience for me and I relinquish the thought that future generations may not have the same opportunity to attend a small school.

I truly believe that I am a product of my environment, and I attended a high school that provided a great environment. Growing up while attending a rural school allowed me to enjoy small classes, close knit relationships with peers and faculty, and also a relaxed sense of familiarity.

My classroom experiences have always been positive ones. I have always had class with my friends. That is so because I can say that at Lexington mostly everyone is friendly. My class sizes usually remains below fifteen students, and that creates a great learning environment. My teachers have always been caring and attentive to my educational needs.

However, one problem I can see with small schools is the lack of classes offered as well as their diversity. Bigger schools have more options for kids when they make their class schedule. Although Lexington cannot do the same it has taken steps to allow students to partake in the classes they desire. At Lexington upper classmen have the option to do work study or to be concurrently enrolled at a college. I

chose to become concurrently enrolled at Oklahoma City Community College my junior year, and now upon my high school graduation in May I will have completed thirty college credit hours. Schools that give students options like concurrent enrollment and work study allow them to get a jump start on their future instead of taking lots of elective classes they neither want nor need.

Larger schools also offer more clubs, organizations, and extra-curricular activities than what smaller schools do. However, I have made the best with the opportunities that have been presented to me. I have taken the initiative to become not just a member in those organizations, but a leader. I have served as officers for several school clubs, but my proudest role was the time I spent as an Oklahoma 4-H State Officer. I have also completed more than 550 hours of community service and many of those hours were through opportunities presented to me by school organizations.

I am a very goal oriented young lady. I believe that I can achieve success in my life and I will accept nothing less. In short, Lexington and the small community I have grown up in has laid a foundation in my life for a great future. And by shooting for the stars I know that the sky is nowhere even close to my limit.

**Rachel Bradley**  
**Northwest Quadrant Representative**  
**Beaver Public Schools**

At my school, learning comes first. The goal of my teachers is not to lecture with hopes that a classroom full of half-asleep students will somehow absorb the information being presented. They strive to find a way to get the kids excited to learn. In a rural school, there are many more opportunities to get students directly involved in the learning process. Having smaller class sizes makes it easier to plan activities and trips that make school more interesting.

My school is like a big family. Everybody knows everybody, and they've known them for quite awhile. With a rural school district, students learn from a familiar face: from someone they see around town, at church, at the grocery store, or at the local cafe. Our teachers organize little league games, our coaches teach Sunday School, and our administrators are cheering us on at every sporting event the school sponsors. There is individual attention for each student whether he asks for it or not. Teachers check up on kids in and out of school to make sure they are doing okay with life, love, and their classwork.

The downside to rural living is the fact that not only do we not have immediate access to the latest technology, we often times cannot afford it. At small schools, with even smaller budgets, the students end up using out of date computers, calculators, and other technology. Another disadvantage to rural school systems is the lack of choices. With less than 15 full-time teachers on staff to work with high school students, there are limited elective classes, and options from which to choose.

Schools are the foundation of small towns. Everything in a rural area revolves around school activities, programs, and sports. Generations of families can be found in old yearbooks and many members of our faculty actually graduated and returned to become teachers in the same classroom where they were once students. Rural schools should remain open in order to educate the future generations of small town kids.

**Justin Pearse**  
**Northeast Quadrant Representative**  
**Prague Public Schools**

Attending a rural school has been a great experience for me. I moved here to Prague, Oklahoma from the Los Angeles area in sixth grade. I had over twice as many kids in my elementary school there as I have in my high school here so I feel I know a little about the differences in small rural schools and big city schools. I have absolutely loved my time spent at Prague High School. I feel like it gave me chances to excel and shine that I would not have experienced in a larger school. I like that I know everyone in my grade as well as most everyone, if not everyone, in my high school. Walking down the halls seeing familiar faces makes the time spent at school fun and exciting. I cannot imagine walking through halls of strangers just hoping to see a familiar face.

Because the school is smaller, there is more opportunity to make a difference, lead an organization, and participate in or try out everything you want. I took full advantage of this throughout high school and involved myself with many activities and clubs. Even this year, I added another to my list. I just joined Speech and Debate Team as a senior and have already qualified for Regionals and am looking forward to taking my entry all the way to the State Competition. Small school, fewer students, and smaller class sizes all helped this to happen and I was able to try out speech and learn that I love it and am good at it. I feel this would have never happened at a larger city school.

Honestly, I can think of nothing adverse about small rural schools. I had opportunity to take numerous AP courses and Spanish and participate in Boys State, HOBY, and All-State Band. I have had some great teachers and some of the best experiences in my life. I do not feel that I was limited in any way by attending a rural school.

What I have experienced here in high school is that everyone knows each other and everyone helps each other. You never get the feeling that you are alone or without resources because the people here take an interest in you. You are not just another face in the crowd. I strongly feel that it would be beneficial for rural

schools to continue on so that future generations can have all the same opportunities as I have had at my rural high school.

**Laci Scales**  
**Southwest Quadrant Representative**  
**Lookeba-Sickles Public Schools**

**LIFE IN A SMALL TOWN**

As I think back on my twelve years at Lookeba-Sickles High School and evaluate my education, my memories go far beyond the classroom. Class trips, state tournaments, academic meets, homecoming dances, proms, pep rallies, concession stands, softball tournaments, musical plays, and basketball games are great memories to simply name a few. These memories, however, would not be possible without the rural school setting in which I received an education and now truly hold dear. While I used to believe school was simply school whether large or small, as a senior I find that hardly so. Small schools in Oklahoma truly have that special something which I wouldn't trade for the world. "That special something" includes extra opportunities, feelings of significance, and boosts of self esteem.

Opportunity is something you wouldn't think of as a positive aspect in a small school. Especially, since we always have fewer choices for students to choose from. However, the opportunity I'm talking about is the opportunity to actually be involved. For example, in a small school ambitious students have the opportunity to be involved in FFA, Student Council, Fellowship of Christian Athletes, varsity athletics, homecoming committees, and charity projects, all while serving as class president. We are able to experience a piece of everything where large school students are lucky to handle only one.

Significance is another important piece of what sets a small school apart. I, along with my peers, all felt significant throughout high school. Whether in the classroom, on the basketball court, or even at an academic meet, our school and entire community always did and continue to make sure we are praised for any and every accomplishment. It's always encouraging to be called by name from the leaders in your community whether they are reassuring you or pushing you forward for the next task.

Finally, the last aspect of life greatly influenced by my small school education is my self esteem and morale. In a small school you are forced to deal with the same people every single day. The life lessons I have learned on protecting relationships and making life fun with a little sacrifice are probably some of my most important. Morale is about attitude and ambition which is something I definitely appreciate and plan to consider in choosing a school for my future children. In reality, statistics say a lot in that small schools are proven to have lower violence and vandalism rates, as compared to urban school systems, along with greater felt connections between the student and teacher.

Each of these attributes filled the halls of my high school and I can only hope my children will one day be able to experience that same sort of safe and family-like atmosphere in the future.

**OROS Calendar**

**OROS Board of Directors Meeting**

**June 23, 2010**

**OSSAA Building**

**Oklahoma City, OK**

**10:00 A.M.**

**OROS Board of Directors Meeting**

**August 18, 2010**

**OSSAA Building**

**Oklahoma City, OK**

**10:00 A.M.**

**The board does not meet in July.**

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**ANNOUNCEMENTS**

**The Fall Conference dates originally scheduled for October 21-22, 2010 has been changed to October 14-15, 2010.**

**The Oklahoma Schools Property/Casualty Cooperative is a program designed for Oklahoma Public Schools. This program can provide your School District secure coverage at significant savings over other coverage providers. For an opportunity to participate in this program, please forward the appropriate information by fax as soon as possible to Oklahoma Schools Property Casualty Cooperative, 5030 N. May Avenue, Box 106, Oklahoma City, OK 73112, Or fax to: (903) 784-2895. The information needed is:**

**Certificate of Coverage** from your current year policies (also provide previous years if available), including the invoice or pricing page.

**Property Schedule** from your most recent property appraisal. (This lists each building with construction type, year built, square footage, replacement cost, and content replacement cost)

**Vehicle Schedule** that includes year, make, model, last 4 VIN, and purchase cost.

**Detail loss runs**, by line of coverage / by coverage term, for the previous five (5) years.

**More information about the program can be found in the April newsletter.**